6. **Construction of the Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra (PBK)**

The objective is to commemorate the evolution and achievements of the India Diaspora. PBK would become the hub of various activities aimed at harnessing the talent pool among the Indian Diaspora and developing a sense of pride in the achievements of India and the Diaspora. This will also provide better work environment to the staff and better facilities to the general public.

7. **Celebration of Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD)**

The objective is to organize the annual PBD for creating a platform for bringing Overseas Indians from various countries together to share their experiences, and integrating it with the Country's development process. The projected outcome is to develop a bond and unity of purpose. Six Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas have been organized so far.

Attack on migrant youth

1176. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that life of Indian students in Victoria Australia has increasingly become unsafe with good number of attacks on migrant youth being reported;

(b) if so, whether Government has taken any steps to protect the life of students so that they do not go for suicides and get rid of depression and other health problems;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) if so, the result thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Government is aware of the incidents of attacks on Indian students in Victoria.

(b) to (d) The High Commission of India, Canberra and the Consulate General of India, Melbourne have taken up the issue at the federal and State levels. The State Government of Victoria has put in place a number of measures including increased patrol in affected areas, security advice for students and constitution of a Monitoring Committee to address the problem. For the specific protection of students working as taxi drives, measures such as security screen between the driver and the passenger and a system of pre-paid fares during night have been introduced.

Mechanism to protect Indians Overseas

†1177. SHRI AJAY SINGH CHAUTALA: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is an appropriate mechanism for the semi-skilled and poor rural overseas Indian workers to save them from exploitation and protect their interests;

---

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether Government would contemplate to take any concrete measure to save overseas Indian workers from exploitation and to protect their interests?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) Instances of exploitation of Indian emigrant workers have come to the notice of the Government from time to time. The complaints mainly pertain to contractual violations by employers such as non-payment/delayed payment of salary, non-availability of medical facilities, proper food, unhygienic living conditions etc. including withholding of passports. For protection and welfare of workers against harassment in the foreign countries the following measures are taken :

(i) On receipt of complaints against registered recruiting agents action is taken by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs under the provision of Emigration Act, 1983, leading to suspension and cancellation of their registration certificate/license in serious cases.

(ii) In respect of unregistered recruiting agents, the complaints are referred to concerned State Police Authorities/Protectors of emigrants for investigation and action for violation of Section 10 of emigration Act 1983 and other provisions of the law as appropriate.

(iii) In respect of complaint against the foreign employer (FE), FE is placed in the prior approval category (Black list) and as a consequence is not allowed to recruit workers from India.

(iv) In case the stay of the Indian emigrant worker is declared illegal on account of various reasons, the Indian Missions take up the matter with the local authorities for either regularizing their stay or their safe deportation back to India.

(v) In case deportation is required, this Ministry coordinates with the local Government through Indian Missions, the state government authorities, Ministries of Home Affairs and External Affairs for ensuring their safe passage back to India.

(vi) Special measures being taken for better protection and welfare of vulnerable sections of emigrants including women emigrants are :

1. Age restriction of 30 years for all women emigrating on ECR passports.

2. Opening of Overseas Indian Workers Resource Centre in host countries to serve as a one stop service outlet for addressing the information and assistance needs of emigrants.

3. A 24x7 helpline *viz.* Overseas Workers Resource Centre (OWRC) has been set up to enable emigrants/prospective emigrants to seek information and file complaints against Recruiting Agents/ Foreign Employers.

(vii) A comprehensive insurance scheme, *viz.* Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana, 2006, is in place, which makes it mandatory for every emigrant worker to be covered under the Scheme while seeking emigration clearance. The Scheme, *inter-alia*, provides workers with life insurance, medical expenses and legal expenses cover and also the deportation expenses wherever needed. With effect from 01.04.2008, the scheme has been upgraded by providing additional benefits at reduced premium rates. Workers now have life insurance coverage of Rs.10 lakhs (in place of Rs.5 lakhs), Medical Expenses coverage of Rs.75,000/- (in place of Rs.50,000/-), Family Hospitalization coverage of Rs.50,000/- (in place of Rs.25,000/-), Maternity Expenses coverage of Rs.25,000/- (in place of Rs.20,000/-), Legal Expenses coverage of Rs. 30,000/- (in place of Rs.25,000/-) etc. The insurance premium has been reduced to Rs.275 for 2 years policy period and Rs.375 for 3 years policy period.

(viii) A vigorous campaign in the print and electronic media to educate potential emigrants including labourers and other vulnerable sections like women emigrants has been launched to propagate the benefits and hazards of legal and illegal migration respectively.

(ix) This Ministry has signed bilateral MOUs with the UAE, Kuwait and Oman and additional protocol on the existing MoU with Qatar to ensure protection to emigrant workers. MoU with Malaysia and Bahrain have been finalized. Efforts are being made to sign MoUs with other labour receiving countries. These MOUs provide for a Joint Committee consisting of representatives of both countries to discuss and resolve grievances of workers.

Grants to panchayats

1178. SHRI DARA SINGH:
SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Twelfth Finance Commission has mandated that Rs.20 thousand crore of grant money for Panchayats from 2005—10 be disbursed by the State Governments within fifteen days of receipt of money from the Central Government;

(b) if so, the States that have reportedly delayed in transferring of grants to Panchayats beyond the stipulated period of fifteen days and the States which have done so in stipulated time;

(c) whether it is a fact that some States have diverted grant money for other than Panchayat purposes; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. The Twelfth Finance Commission (TFC) has recommended Rs. 20,000 crore as grants to